

I oppose loosening the rules designed to promote and protect diversity of media ownership. These rules were adopted to ensure that the public would receive a diverse range of viewpoints from the media, and not simply the opinions of a handful of media conglomerates.

Democracy requires a fully informed public, and that implies information coming from a wide variety of sources. Media ownership in few hands is dangerous, because without competing sources to check against, there is no way to judge whether the dominant voices are trustworthy.

Diversity of viewpoints is not measured simply by the number of commercially competing entities. As media ownership becomes concentrated, the owning entities become increasingly larger, and come to have more in common with one another. Large corporations tend to share crucial viewpoints that affect the way information is presented. True diversity requires competition from smaller, intellectually independent sources of information.

Neither does the variety of new media outlets, such as cable television and the Internet, in itself insure diversity, if these new outlets themselves become dominated by a few owners and operators belonging to large commercial entities.

As an example, in my experience as a former radio broadcast engineer, I have spent thousands of hours listening to a large number of broadcast outlets over the years. I find that the kinds of programming available have become fewer, and the content more homogeneous and less connected with local concerns and interests, as time has passed. It is no coincidence that this has occurred as station ownership has passed increasingly from small local and regional companies to large national chains. The number of stations has not decreased, but the variety of viewpoints available certainly has.

The "airwaves" was once considered a public resource, and those who profited from it were required to act in the public interest. I feel that we have moved too far in the other direction already, and should start to return closer to this ideal.